

Special POST Meeting

December 12, 2007

Warwick Police Department

MINUTES

Colonel McCartney opened the special meeting of the Police Officer's Commission on Standards and Training at 10:18 a.m. in the training room of the Warwick Police Department.

POST Members Present:

Colonel Steven McCartney, Chair, Chief George L. Kelley III, Vice-Chair, Major Steven G. O'Donnell representing Col. Brendan P. Doherty, Mr. Robert Driscoll. Mr. Richard Wooley, Assistant A.G./Legal Counsel was also present. Chief Anthony Pesare was not present.

Colonel McCartney indicated that he called this special meeting to discuss the Rhode Island state fiscal crisis and its impact on the Municipal Police Academy. The Rhode Island Police Chiefs were also invited to attend the meeting of the POST. Director Silva was asked to facilitate a presentation on the present budget negotiations and the status of the March 2008 Academy class.

Police Chiefs & Others Present:

Chief Sid Wordell, Chief Joseph Moran, Deputy Chief Clay Choquette, Chief Peter Brousseau, Chief John Desmarais, Chief Ronald Lepre, Chief David Desjarlais, Colonel Herbert Paquette, Colonel Russell Serpa, Colonel Stephen McGrath, Deputy Chief Mark Titus, Captain Robert Nelson.

Col. McCartney welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Director Anthony J. Silva to brief the group on the status of the FY08 and FY09 budget negotiations.

Director Silva informed the group that the State is in a very difficult financial situation with a huge deficit this year and an ever-increasing deficit looming next year. As a result, very difficult decisions must be made to ensure the fiscal integrity of the State. He informed the group that he had a meeting with State budget director Rosemary Booth Gallogly last week that resulted in reductions to the FY'08 budget. Currently, there is insufficient funding for a March '08 academy. Col. Serpa advised the group that he has already invested approximately \$6,000.00 in a recruit candidate that Bristol is sending to the Academy in March. He indicated that many other cities and towns would be in the same situation. Director Silva advised the group that a final decision had not yet been made on the March class and that he was still in discussions with the budget office. Director Silva also advised that he had several options for the POST to

consider that would assist with Academy funding.

Director Silva presented a PowerPoint presentation showing an historical overlook of Academy budgets since 2005 including personnel, contract, and operational expenses.

Silva reviewed recently recommended funding reductions by the budget office which included reductions in overtime, vehicle expenses, postage, office supplies, etc. As a result of these reductions, there is presently insufficient funding to conduct a March 2008 class. The FY09 recommended budget also had similar reductions.

Director Silva provided the group with 3 options to consider for continued funding of the Academy.

Option #1: Maintain the status quo. The POST could decide to continue with three classes per year with continued level funding by the budget office. This action would require discussions with the Budget Director and other state leaders to ensure funded training of the Rhode Island's law enforcement

Option #2: Director Silva recommended instituting an application fee, per candidate, of \$250.00 in FY'08, beginning with the March '08 Academy with a possible increase to \$500.00 in FY09. This would generate approximately \$25K in the FY08 and \$50K in FY 09. The revenue would revert to the general fund, but it would likely permit

the Academy to continue fund training at present levels. The POST could request funding for 3 classes per year or move to an 8am – 4pm with two 20-week classes. The extended 20-week classes would be required to ensure minimum certification standards are met. Under present conditions, 90 recruits could be accommodated in two 20-week sessions. There was concern within the group that this would create a significant financial impact on the cities and towns in overtime, etc.

Much discussion followed. Col. McCartney emphasized that the League of Cities and Towns would have to be contacted and the Mayors and Managers would have to approve a plan to charge fees. The Colonel felt the POST did not have the discretionary authority to make this type of decision. Mr. Driscoll, Portsmouth Town Manager and POST member recommended every community prepare a fiscal impact that this action would have on cities and towns. There was general discussion on the serious question of turning the police academy into a revenue generating agency. There was general concern that changes to the Academy budget in mid-year have a severe and dangerous impact on the Cities and Towns. Elimination of an Academy class, adding application fees, and/or moving to two classes per year would have a cumulative effect of costing tens of thousands of dollars.

Option #3: An application fee of \$250.00 would be instituted per recruit officer. The POST would request 3 classes per year with

adequate funding. Non-sponsored candidates would be permitted to attend the Academy to fill empty seat. A non-sponsored recruit fee of \$5K per attendee would be required that would generate \$100-\$200K per year. This action would result in a certified officer applying to departments. Enabling legislation would be required. Col. McCartney reiterated that the POST did not have the authority to make this decision on behalf of the Cites and Towns.

Again, there was general discussion that followed Director Silva's presentation. Many Chiefs felt that the recruit officers who are trained in the Academy are already independent revenue generators with the violations they write and issue to motorists. The bulk of these fines revert back to the state. The Chiefs were unanimous in their opinion that the Academy should not become a revenue generating agency. Chief Wordell was concerned that a reduction in the present level of recruit training would result in larger departments luring trained officers away from smaller departments.

Chief Moran recommended that the Academy not become involved in generating revenue and that the State continue funding training at an adequate level. He felt that legislation leaders should be contacted for their support.

Chief Kelley motioned to approve pursuing an option that would reflect Chief Moran's recommendation to maintain the status quo with adequate funding of Police Academy operations. Before a second

could be recognized, Col. McCartney asked Chief Kelley if he wanted to include notifying the General Assembly and the League of Cities and Towns to support the merits of the motion. Chief Kelley amended his original motion to include this language and the motion was seconded by Mr. Driscoll. Motion to approve was 4-0.

Director Silva addressed questions surrounding the elimination of overtime. He told the group that he was unsure if the staff would file a grievance over working in excess of 40 hours for no pay. Silva also informed the group that the operations of the Academy begin at 7:30 a.m. daily and continue until either 5:30 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. Saturday classes are also held. It was virtually impossible to adjust the schedules of the two staff members due to such limited staffing. Mr. Driscoll was concerned that the elimination of the overtime would result in an unfair labor practice filed years down the road that would be carry significant damages and repercussions to the State and to the POST.

Mr. Driscoll motioned to adjourn at 12:20 p.m., seconded by Chief Kelley. Col. McCartney adjourned the special meeting.

Minutes recorded by:

Chief Anthony J. Silva, RIMPA-Director